LOCAL NEWS

Local Drag Activist Pattie Gonia Tells Patagonia: 'Drop the Lawsuit'

Sued for trademark infringement, Pattie says the 'bullying' lawsuit will cost $1 million to fight, ruin her livelihood

By Peter Madsen · May 28, 2024

Pattie Gonia, a renown drag artist and environmentalist, responds to Patagonia's trademark lawsuit. "Drop it." Credit: Samuel Crossley

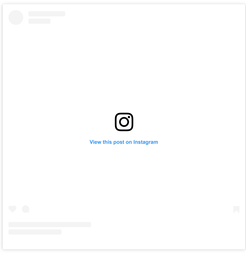
Pattie Gonia ain't goin' nowhere.

A nationally touring drag artist, entrepreneur, LGBTQ activist and environmentalist, Bend-based Pattie Gonia broke her silence May 27 about the federal lawsuit Patagonia, the clothing company, filed against her for trademark infringement in January.

The outdoor brand is suing for $1 in damages, along with demanding that Wyn Wiley, a Bend resident, stop performing as Pattie Gonia.

Quelle horreur!

In an open letter posted to social media and her website, Pattie wrote: "Patagonia told the media they're only suing me for $1. What they're actually trying to do is take away my name permanently and threaten me with more than $1million in legal fees.



"This is not a brand conflict. This is a corporation trying to erase an activist. This is how corporations bully individuals who cannot match their resources."

The two parties have a scheduling conference on June 8. An attorney has been acting on behalf of Wiley's company, Entrepreneur Enterprises, while Pattie's on tour.

The Source reported the lawsuit earlier this year, noting the monetary damage of $1 and that lawsuit would complicate the 20-stop, national drag show tour Pattie is currently on, along with other money-making activities. (At press time, Pattie is performing in Philadelphia, according to the tour schedule.)

Patagonia filed the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of the District of Central California because the clothing company is headquartered in Ventura. Wiley had performed in character in the district, also selling branded gear at merch tables and appearing in several episodes of "Go Gently," which Pattie hosted and filmed there.

Pattie Gonia, né Wyn Wiley, is based in Bend. Credit: Evan Rowdy Rivest

In her open letter, Pattie says that changing her stage name would destroy her brand recognition, winnow her activist and career opportunities and deprive her employees of their livelihoods.

"...I'm fighting, and I'm inviting you to join me in a simple call to action: Patagonia, drop the lawsuit," Pattie wrote. "This is a betrayal of Patagonia's core mission. Because if they're in business to save the home planet, why are they suing a climate activist?"

The crux of the issue lies with the cheeky alias that Wiley assumed as an ironic — and now-iconic — stage moniker in 2018. Punny, irreverent, code-switching names are de rigueur in drag tradition. However, that underground sensibility has come up against the no-nonsense reality of intellectual property law, which requires a holder to defend its IP against appropriations deemed diluting or threatening, according to the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office. A potential result of this lawsuit could be Pattie and Patagonia entering into a trademark coexistence agreement, just as Apple Computers and Apple Corps, the record label founded by the Beatles, entered into in 1991.

In its complaint, Patagonia cites examples of Pattie's fan art that appropriates its mountainous logo, along with clothing merchandise that reads "Pattie Gonia" as examples of trademark infringement, along with overlapping initiatives, such as environmentalism and LGBTQ activism that may confuse the public.

In her open letter, Pattie encourages supporters to write to Patagonia, yet she urges decency. She also tells fans to not single out Patagonia employees.

For more context, read "Pattie Gonia Sued by Patagonia for Trademark Infringement."

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